

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-11 VO-03 SCA-01 INSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7112

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 1361

FOR WILSON FROM MASTERS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: EXTENDED INDOCHINA REFUGEE PROGRAM--PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT
IN THAILAND

REF: STATE 014173

1. AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE WILL NOT BE BACK IN THE OFFICE UNTIL
JANUARY 27. HE MAY HAVE SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE POINTS
RAISED IN YOUR MESSAGE. MEANWHILE THE FOLLOWING ARE MY REACTIONS.

2. WE WELCOME FURTHER DEPARTMENT INITIATIVES WITH THIRD
COUNTRIES FOR ACCEPTANCE OF INDOCHINA REFUGEES NOW IN THAILAND.
WE WILL FOLLOW UP HERE WITH THE FRENCH, GERMAN, CANADIAN AND
AUSTRALIAN EMBASSIES TO UNDERScore OUR WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH
THEM TO FACILITATE THE MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES TO THIRD COUNTRIES. IN
ADDITION TO SHARING OUR VISA FALCON AND OTHER INFORMATION WITH
THEM, THIS COOPERATION MIGHT INCLUDE JOINT SCREENING AT THE
CAMPS AND SHARED TRANSPORTATION WITH U.S. REFUGEE OFFICERS WHEN
THE LATTER VISIT THE CAMPS.

3. REGARDING A THAI COMMITMENT TO KEEP THE REMAINING REFUGEES HERE,
AS YOU KNOW, THE THAI HAVE NEVER PUBLICLY ACCEPTED THE FACT
THAT THE BULK OF THESE REFUGEES WILL REMAIN PERMANENTLY IN
THAILAND. THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION IS
THAT THEY ARE HERE TEMPORARILY PENDING MOVEMENT TO THIRD COUNTRIES
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OR RETURN TO THEIR HOMELANDS. WE SEE NO PROSPECT THAT THE THAI

WILL CHANGE THIS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED STAND, PARTICULARLY DURING WHAT PROMISES TO BE A HEATED ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN WHICH ANY CHANGE IN RTG POLICY WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BECOME AN ISSUE.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE RTG WILL FORCE ANY LARGE NUMBER OF REFUGEES BACK ACROSS THE BORDER. THERE HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN A FEW ISOLATED INSTANCES OF FORCED REPATRIATION, BUT WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THESE HAVE RESULTED FROM ACTIONS BY OVER ZEALOUS LOCAL OFFICIALS, NOT IN RESPONSE TO RTG POLICY. WE BELIEVE KNOWLEDGEABLE THAI IN AUTHORITY RECOGNIZED THAT THE BULK OF THE REFUGEES WILL REMAIN MORE OR LESS PERMANENTLY IN THAILAND. HOWEVER, FOR REASONS NOTED ABOVE THEY CANNOT AND WILL NOT SAY SO PUBLICLY. THIS WILL HAVE TO HAPPEN OVER TIME AS THE REFUGEES ARE GRADUALLY ABLE TO INFILTRATE INTO THE LOCAL SOCIETY. THIS IS SLOWLY BEGINNING IN SOME AREAS.

5. WE DOUBT THAT ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY TO PAROLE REFUGEES INTO THE UNITED STATES WILL GIVE US ANY GREAT LEVERAGE TO CHANGE THIS SITUATION. THE PRESENT THAI POLICY STEMS FROM IMPORTANT POLITICAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS AND NO LIKELY GOVERNMENT WILL WANT TO RUN THE RISK OF CHANGING THAT POLICY. WE WOULD, HOWEVER, BE WILLING, IN TELLING THE THAI ABOUT OUR NEW PAROLE AUTHORITY, TO TELL THEM WE ARE DOING THIS ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE BULK OF THE REFUGEES WILL REMAIN IN THAILAND. THIS WILL NOT INDUCE THE THAI TO CHANGE THEIR PUBLIC POLICY BUT MIGHT BE HELPFUL WITHIN INNER GOVERNMENT CIRCLES.

6. YOU WILL BE THE BEST JUDGE OF HOW TO PRESENT THIS TO THE CONGRESS, BUT WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IF THERE IS ANY PUBLICITY ON OUR VIEW AND ASSUMPTION THAT MOST OF THE REFUGEES WILL INEVITABLY HAVE TO BECOME PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF THAILAND.
MASTERS

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